

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AS, PINT

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1. SUMMARY: DURING THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 17 THROUGH 21 THE AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN BEGAN IN EARNEST. THREE THEMES PREDOMINATED. THE LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTY COALITION CHARGED THE FORMER WHITLAM GOVERNMENT WITH ECONOMIC MIS-MANAGEMENT AND INCOMPETENCE. THE LABOR PARTY INSISTED THAT IT HAD BEEN IMPROPERLY DISMISSED FROM OFFICE. THERE IS A SWING TOWARDS LABOR IN THE MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS OF NSW AND VICTORIA WHILE THE COALITION SIDE SEEMS TO BE DOING WELL FOR THE MOMENT IN TASMANIA AND QUEENSLAND.
END SUMMARY

2. THE LATEST MORGAN-GALLOP POLL WHICH WAS COMPLETED ON NOVEMBER 8 PRIOR TO THE DISMISSAL OF THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT
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HAD THE ALP AT 49 PERCENT, THE AUSTRALIA PARTY AT 2 PERCENT

THE LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTIES AT 44 PERCENT, THE DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY AT 3 PERCENT, WITH 2 PERCENT UNDECIDED. AFTER DISTRIBUTING MINOR PARTY PREFERENCES THE RESPECTIVE PERCENTAGES ARE ALP 51 PERCENT, LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTY 46 PERCENT, UNDECIDED 3 PERCENT. THIS IS A SHIFT OF 15 PERCENT AWAY FROM THE COALITION TO THE ALP SINCE JULY WHEN THE LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTIES STOOD AT 61 PERCENT COMPARED WITH LABOR'S 36 PERCENT WITH 3 PERCENT UNDECIDED. THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S DISMISSAL OF WHITLAM ON NOVEMBER 11 PROBABLY GENERATED EVEN MORE SUPPORT FOR THE ALP.

3. IF THE ALP CAN SUCCEED IN KEEPING THE CAMPAIGN CENTERED ON THE ISSUE OF WHITLAM'S DISMISSAL THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT ITS SUPPORT WILL HOLD. IF THE COALITION PARTIES CAN DIVERT THE CAMPAIGN TOWARDS THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT'S RECORD OF MANAGING THE ECONOMY AND ITS PERCEIVED ADMINISTRATIVE INEPTITUDE THEY HAVE A CHANCE OF SWINGING VOTES AWAY FROM LABOR.

4. WHAT IS CLEAR AT THIS TIME IS THAT THE PROSPECT OF AN EASY LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTY WIN INDICATED IN THE POLLS TAKEN JUST PRIOR TO THE SUPPLY CRISIS HAS DISAPPEARED. THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME IS NOT CLEAR AT THIS TIME. THE GENERAL FEELING IS THAT THE ALP HAS GAINED GROUND STRONGLY IN THE SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE AREAS AND THAT SOME MARGINAL SUBURBAN SEATS HELD BY THE LIBERALS IN THESE AREAS MAY BE AT RISK. THE ALP, HOWEVER, HAS LOST SUPPORT IN QUEENSLAND AND TASMANIA AND WILL PROBABLY LOSE SEATS IN BOTH STATES.
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